

# STAYING SAFE FROM THE VIOLENT HOARDS



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preparation .....	4
When Planning Isn't Enough .....	5
Remain Calm .....	5
Be Inconspicuous .....	5
Move With the Crowd .....	6
Getting Inside .....	6
Driving to Safety .....	7
Riot Control Agents .....	8
Riot Survival Kit .....	9

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A riot is defined as civil unrest characterized by intense bursts of violence. History has proven that deadly riots can occur for the simplest and mundane reasons. Soccer games have incited violence many times in the past. Only a couple of years ago, a riot broke out in Vancouver after a championship hockey game. If riots can start over such small things, the violence and disorder that would occur after a large scale event such as economic collapse or a terrorist attack would be devastating.

Riots are dangerous and deadly. An estimated one million people died during the civil unrest that followed India's independence. Thousands of people die each year from rioting and related violence. Although angry outbursts can sometimes be anticipated, many times riots break out without warning. The confusion and destruction associated with a terrorist attack could force entire cities of people to riot out of fear and uncertainty.

## **Preparation**

Preparing ahead of time for any type of disaster scenario is always a good idea. After a natural disaster or attack, you will not be able to rely on emergency services or law enforcement. These services will be overwhelmed and unavailable for many emergency situations.

A key component of successful survival in any situation is planning. Whether a natural disaster wipes out an area, a terrorist attack kills millions, or an EMP leaves the electrical grid in shambles, having a survival plan could mean the difference between life and death. When a catastrophic event occurs, the supply chain will be interrupted. This means no food on store shelves, no medicine at the pharmacy, and no help from government agencies for weeks or even longer.

The best way to survive the rioting and violence that will ensue after such an attack is to avoid the affected area at all costs. Having a well-conceived plan ahead of time means you will not be forced into action immediately following a disaster. One of the safest places to be during a riot is inside. The ability to stay safely within the confines of your home (if possible and safe to do so) is an extremely valuable asset during a crisis. This means having at least a 10 to 14 day supply of food, required medications, adequate clothing, and even weapons to defend yourself if the rioters get too close.

Obviously if the riot is too close or if your home has been damaged during the disaster, staying where you are is not the ideal scenario. Leaving your home during a riot is dangerous. Leaving your home during a riot without first having a plan for escape

can be deadly. If you are forced to leave your home and seek shelter elsewhere, it is imperative to have an escape plan. Many of the normal routes you might take to leave could be blocked, damaged, or full of violent rioters. Understanding all possible escape routes before a disaster strikes allows you to rationally assess each potential roadway and circumvent those that present an unacceptable amount of danger.

Remember that riots can and will break out for seemingly inconsequential reasons. Even during these outbursts, people often die or suffer serious injuries. The level of violence during a post-disaster riot will be exponentially more severe and the area should be avoided at all costs. Part of what makes riots so dangerous, however, is the sheer unpredictability of them. A peaceful crowd one minute can turn grotesquely violent the next with little to no external provocation. This means that no matter how well you have prepared beforehand, all your planning could go up in smoke at a moment's notice and you may find yourself right in the middle of a full-scale, deadly riot.

### **When Planning Isn't Enough**

Any survivalist expert will agree that planning typically has the greatest impact on your chances of survival during and immediately following a catastrophic event. Those same experts also agree that no matter how much planning you do, it may not be enough. No one really knows just how severe the impact of a natural disaster or terrorist attack will be or how it will affect the population of the area. For this reason, it is important to understand how to maximize your chances of survival if you cannot safely escape the area and wind up in the midst of the chaos.

#### *Remain Calm*

A skill often taught to soldiers is how to remain calm under intense pressure. The techniques for accomplishing this vary to some extent but the idea is that remaining calm allows for rational thought processes. If you panic, irrational thoughts and actions will take hold and you will usually find yourself in a more precarious position.

Deep breathing exercises are a quick way to keep your emotions in check. Take about two minutes to focus on nothing other than your breathing. This calms you down and lets your brain regain its logical thinking capacity again despite the peril you face. Armed with a calm demeanor, it becomes much easier to devise an escape plan that minimizes risk.

#### *Be Inconspicuous*

The longer you are exposed to the conditions present in a riot the greater your chance for injury becomes. Therefore, your primary objective is to escape the area without drawing unnecessary attention to yourself.

This can be accomplished in a number of ways. Clothing is one of the most obvious. For safety, it is best to wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible. Long sleeved shirts and pants are ideal because the material will protect you from some riot control chemicals that may be employed during the crisis. Do not wear anything that looks like a uniform as rioters may confuse you with law enforcement and try to attack. Try not to wear dark clothing or hooded sweatshirts as these could make you look like a rioter to law enforcement.

Without participating in violence, play the part of a rioter when possible. If crowds of people are chanting, chant with them. You are much less likely to be attacked by the crowd if you appear to be one of them. Avoid making eye contact whenever possible. During a situation like this, many rational people can be extremely aggressive and even just looking at them may invoke a confrontation. Move with your head down at a reasonable pace. Running or walking too quickly will draw attention to your intent of leaving the area.

#### *Move With the Crowd*

Think of a riotous mob like a strong river current. It is impossible for an average person to swim upstream against a strong river current. You will succumb to exhaustion quickly and could even drown. Moving against an aggressive crowd is just as hazardous. Moving in the opposite direction of rioters not only makes it obvious that you are not one of them but it also increases the chances of a confrontation as you fight against crowds of people.

The best way to move toward an exit when stuck in the middle of a crowd is to move in the direction of the crowd while slowly moving toward the outside. Traveling directly toward the outer limits of the crowd looks suspicious. If you move slowly toward the outside, it is likely that people will not notice. Once you have gotten outside the center of the violence it is easier to determine the best escape route and get there inconspicuously.

The one exception to this rule is if you notice the crowd moving into a bottleneck. This might be a tunnel, fenced area, or high walled enclosure that forces the crowd into a tight place. Often confined rioters will become even more volatile and violent. If the crowd is moving dangerously close to a bottleneck, it is better to risk looking suspicious and get to the side and away from that area as quickly as possible.

#### *Getting Inside*

Whenever possible, get indoors quickly. Typically the worst violence during a riot occurs out in the streets where the majority of people are concentrated. Buildings can



offer safety for those looking to escape the riot and not participate. Keep in mind that if rioters notice you entering a building they may also enter and this can leave you trapped and vulnerable.

For this reason, it is best to get away from the larger concentrations of people before attempting to enter a building. People on the outskirts of an angry mob are typically less violent than those right in the middle. These slightly calmer individuals will be less likely to display hostility towards you for attempting to seek shelter.

Make sure that if you do decide to enter a building it is not a private residence. You can easily be shot by a homeowner that mistakes you for a rioter if you barge into their home unannounced. Large, public access facilities are usually the best buildings to look for although government buildings and financial institutions are often targeted during a riot. These types of buildings should be avoided if possible due to the likelihood that they will be attacked. Even worse, rioters may mistake you for an employee of the institution leaving you more vulnerable to attack.

### *Driving to Safety*

A car provides a quick way to get to safety in many instances. However, the element of blending in with the crowd is gone if you decide to drive. If you live in a suburban area and can escape without traveling through the dense populations of the city, you have the best chances for escaping the area unharmed. If you live in a high population area or are forced to travel through it on your way to safety, a vehicle can present a unique set of challenges.

If the roads are packed with rioters, it will be difficult to navigate through the crowds safely. Many people will be threatened by your vehicle and may try to damage it or even take it for themselves. If you find yourself in a heavily crowded and aggressive area, do not stop the car. Continue driving at a moderate pace and use your horn to let people know you are coming through. If you move too fast, rioters or law enforcement may see you as a threat. Moving too slowly makes your vehicle an easy target for attack.

Often people who attempt to flee the area in a vehicle do not make it as far as they intend. The roads may be closed due to damage or a police barricade. Rioters may attack the vehicle forcing them to abandon it and move to safety. Be prepared to ditch the car. Police are often instructed not to let anyone past the barricade during a riot. Moving on foot may afford you an alternative route around the barricade. In truly desperate times following a disaster, your vehicle may look like the perfect escape vehicle for others. Protecting your car is not worth your life. If aggressive rioters

attempt to seize your vehicle, it is usually best to let them have it and move discreetly to safety along the perimeter of the violence.

If you are fortunate to get outside of the affected area continue driving for as long as it takes to get to a safe location. This may be a relative's house in a neighboring city or another bug out location that you have pre-designated during your survival planning. Even when you feel that you are far enough away from the situation, remember to stay vigilant. Rioters can quickly spread from the violent epicenter and could be moving toward your location.

### *Riot Control Agents*

Law enforcement is usually armed with a variety of riot control tools ranging from chemicals to rubber bullets. If you know you will be traveling through a riot-stricken area, plan for riot control techniques to minimize injury to yourself. Long sleeved clothing and pants will keep chemical agents from contaminating your exposed skin.

Airborne chemical agents such as tear gas or pepper spray can make it almost impossible to navigate your way to safety. Although having a gas mask is the most effective method to prevent falling victim to these agents, wearing a gas mask will make you stand out in a crowd and make you more susceptible to attack. Instead, consider carrying a solution that is half water and half liquid antacid in a spray bottle. Especially effective on pepper spray, the antacid solution will help minimize the effects of the chemical agent.

The same solution can be sprayed on all exposed skin to neutralize the burning effects of these chemical agents. Although exposure to the mucous membranes is usually the most painful, any exposed skin will burn from direct exposure.

Tear gas makes breathing especially difficult. Carrying rags soaked in vinegar, lemon juice, or even water and covering your mouth with them makes breathing after tear gas deployment much easier. The chemical components of the gas will be absorbed by the wet rags.

Avoid touching your face during a chemical agent attack. This can spread the chemicals around and actually make the effects more severe. If you wear corrective contact lenses, be sure to remove them and wear glasses before making an escape attempt. If chemical riot agents get under the contact lens, the effects are compounded making it impossible to see.

Rubber bullets are another tactic used by law enforcement during a riot. Although designed to be a non-lethal form of ammunition, a direct hit to the head or



another sensitive area of the body could lead to death or serious injury at the very least. Some experts recommend wearing a helmet to protect your head from rubber bullets and debris possibly thrown by the crowd. Although this is an option, wearing a helmet could make you appear like a law enforcement officer to an aggressive crowd subjecting you to a higher risk for attack.

The best defense against rubber bullets or high pressure water is to stay away from them whenever possible. If you move smartly through the crowd while locating an exit, you will often avoid being in a direct line of assault from these devices. If you find yourself in an area where you may get hit, try to be as non-aggressive as possible while you move away from the area. If you look like a passive bystander you are less likely to be targeted by law enforcement personnel.

### **Riot Survival Kit**

Riots can erupt suddenly. A volatile economy responsible for historic unemployment rates, recent terrorist attacks, and a slew of powerful natural disasters mean that a large scale riot could occur at any time. Armed with this knowledge, you should take the time to assemble a simple riot survival kit that can be accessed quickly when a catastrophe happens and violence is inevitable.

1. Clothing - Long sleeve clothing and pants will prevent your skin from being exposed to chemical agents that may be deployed by law enforcement. Make sure the clothing does not resemble any type of uniform as this may make you more susceptible to attack by rioters.
2. Small amount of cash - After social collapse, you may be required to bribe law enforcement officials to get past a police barricade and leave the affected area. You will also need money to purchase food and other supplies once you have safely evacuated.
3. Small knife - A knife can be used for many purposes in any survival situation. It can also be used as a weapon if escaping from an angry mob becomes impossible.
4. Extra cell phone - Most people have a cell phone already but it is a good idea to purchase a second inexpensive model that can be stored in your riot kit.
5. Battery operated radio - A radio allows you to listen for changes in the situation and can alert you to areas where it is not safe to travel.

6. Flashlight - A flashlight is a necessity in the dark or if you enter a building for safety. The power is likely to be out as a result of the initial disaster which can make moving around very difficult without some form of light.
7. Map of the area - Especially when traveling on foot, a map provides insight about possible alternate routes when primary travel routes become impassable.
8. Matches - Matches stored in a waterproof case or plastic resealable bag can be used to start a fire if needed. A lighter can also be used but is also susceptible to water damage if not kept dry.
9. Pepper spray - If you become cornered by aggressive rioters, pepper spray can afford you enough time to escape.
10. Antacid solution - As discussed previously, combining equal parts of liquid antacid and water in a spray bottle will counteract the effects of some chemical agents commonly used to suppress rioters. Spraying the solution on areas of exposed skin will lessen the burning sensation typically associated with exposure by neutralizing the acidic chemicals within the compound.
11. Bandanas or rags - These pieces of cloth can be soaked in water and placed over your mouth allowing for easier breathing in the presence of airborne chemicals. Be sure to change the cloth often as it will quickly become saturated with chemicals and lose its effectiveness.

This list is not meant to be all-inclusive but the items listed should be included in all riot survival kits at a minimum. If you require medications you should pack at least a 72 hour supply in this kit as well. Any other things you can think of that may be specific to your area can also be included. Just make sure the entire kit fits into a bag that can easily and inconspicuously be carried on your back. The last thing you want is a large bag that draws attention to you and is difficult to manage as you move through an angry crowd.

Just like the events that cause them, a riot is a very unpredictable phenomena that is difficult to plan for. Understanding the events surrounding the crisis and practicing the safety techniques outlined in this guide will put you at a distinct advantage over everyone else. This small advantage may very well be what gets you out of the area quickly and efficiently when a riot occurs.